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SAFEGUARDING YOUR FOOD AND DRUG SUPPLIES -- NO. 19.

A radio talk by W. W. Vincent, Chief, Western District, Food and Drug Administration, delivered October 16, 1930, through station KGO and associated NBC stations.

U. S. Department of Agriculture

Good Morning, Label Readers! Last week I told you about certain drug products, including fat-reducers. I told you that there might be danger in consuming such products. I also said there might be danger to the especially stout in rigid dieting, except under skilled physicians' care. I pointed out the limitations of the Food and Drugs Act, especially as it applies to drugs. This to the end of making you discriminating purchasers of proprietary remedies.

I promised to talk of sweater things today, namely, dessert or pudding powders and gelatin desserts. I am tackling a rather big subject - one I find it difficult to tell you about in a general way. Many dessert preparations are offered to the American consumer. A number of them are practically finished products, that is, they contain all the ingredients necessary in the making of a finished dessert. Others contain but a few of the necessary ingredients.

In the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act, we have had occasion to require label changes on many of these products because the law demands that they shall be truthfully branded and that their labels be not false or misleading in any particular. Further, the law requires that they be unadulterated - that means they should contain no added poisonous or deleterious ingredients - also, that they not be colored in a manner whereby inferiority is concealed and that none of the constituents entering them be even in part filthy or decomposed. You doubtless are wondering why I mention added deleterious ingredients, or partially decomposed ingredients, when I discuss dessert preparations. I will tell you. Gelatine is often used in making desserts. Your Food and Drug Administration has given a great deal of attention to gelatin. There are different grades of edible gelatine. There is a point at which low-grade gelatine ceases to be known as such, but becomes a commercial glue.

Edible gelatine is a by-product of the meat-packing industry. Chemically, we term it a nitrogenous colloid, one that dissolves in hot water and, upon cooling, forms a gelatinous mass.

Agar agar, sometimes incorrectly called vegetable gelatine, is a non-nitrogenous substance, possessing somewhat the same properties, but remaining solid at higher temperatures. It is obtained from various seaweeds. It has no food value.

Your Food and Drug Administration requires gelatine to be clean and sound, free from odor and taste, and free from contamination with such heavy metals as copper, arsenic, zinc and mercury. Your food authorities

have found all of those products present in so-called edible gelatines. And the Government's published Notices of Judgment tell of many actions against shipments which contained enough mercury, copper, arsenic and zinc to render them potentially injurious to health.

Let me tell you about an importer who attempted to bring into the United States a considerable quantity of glue which was, in part, contaminated as I have related. He tried to import it as edible gelatine. Naturally, your Food and Drug authorities detained that importation and it was released to the importer from Customs custody under a bond providing for its disposition in other than food channels. It was to be disposed of for those purposes for which ordinary glue is commonly employed, such as in the manufacture of straw hats, photographic work, and the furniture industry. His importation being covered by a bond, he thought it would be necessary only to report the sale of the product for technical purposes. Well, a Food and Drug agent anticipated that this gelatin might find its way into food channels. So he made the necessary arrangements to find out for what use the product was actually intended. A short time later he found it being shipped to confectioners' supply houses, ice cream manufacturers, and other establishments that would have disposed of that gelatine through food channels. Seizures of this gelatine were quickly made at various points in the United States and the importer was soon aware that he was involved in a rather hazardous business. In addition to the monetary loss sustained as a result of the seizures, he was liable for prosecution for having shipped this glue as gelatine in interstate commerce, when it was in fact dangerous to the health of the people. He has to face a forfeiture proceeding against his importer's bond. My friends, it is by actions such as these that your Food and Drugs Act insures you a satisfactory food supply, wholesome, and truthfully branded.

What are the three principal ingredients of dessert preparations that first come to your mind? Milk, eggs, and sugar. They are required in nearly all desserts. Practically all cookbook recipes call for them. Numerous recipes require butter and sometimes baking powder, generally a flavor, and often corn starch or flour.

When you buy a product labeled "Pudding Powder," for most types you have a right to expect a product made from eggs, whole milk, sugar and starch, or flour, with an added genuine flavor. There are many products that are sold to make, or assist in making, puddings, which do not contain all of the essential ingredients. These are usually labeled with a fanciful name. They often consist essentially of corn starch, artificially colored and flavored, with an imitation flavor. They usually carry a statement "To be used in making puddings. Add sugar, eggs, and milk," or "One package of this preparation with three eggs, two cups of milk and a cup of sugar will serve six persons with a delicious dessert."

There are many different recipes in which these pudding powders may be used. Some powders contain sugar. Some contain dried whole milk, but more often they contain dried skim milk. Some contain dried whole egg.

It is believed that all of them are wholesome, satisfactory articles of food. Nevertheless, it will pay you to read their labels most carefully in order to avoid paying an unnecessarily high price for what you get. A complete pudding powder is worth a great deal more than an artificially colored and flavored corn starch to which you have to add milk, eggs and sugar. The label will tell you what you are buying and the price will tell you which is the better value. The type of flavoring used has a lot to do with the quality of the product. Obviously a product flavored with a rich, genuine, fruit flavor is superior in quality and usually higher in price than one flavored with a cheap, imitation flavor. Your labels will tell you the kind of flavors used in the product.

Do you know the difference between a chocolate pudding powder and a chocolate-flavored pudding powder? There is quite a bit. A chocolate pudding powder is flavored with pure chocolate and a chocolate-flavored pudding powder is generally flavored with cocoa. Cocoa is different from chocolate in that it has had much of the valuable cocoa fat removed. Read the label also to see if the product has been artificially colored. A fruity color that makes the product so appetizing in appearance may be from strawberries, or it may be from a harmless coal tar dye. The label will tell you.

Do you ever use pie fillers? Many people do - and there are a number of such preparations on the market. To find out what constitutes a proper filling for pies, we look in the standard cookbooks which contain the recipes used by housewives. And cookbooks agree that the essential ingredients for pie fillers, in general, are starch or flour, eggs, sugar, milk and flavor. Your Food and Drug agents are particular about the kind of filling that goes into pie. Pie is a good old American institution and we feel that the integrity of the ingredients used in it must be maintained. The most common preparations sold as pie fillers are for making lemon pie, custard pie, chocolate pie, and cream pie.

According to the cookbook, lemon pie filling should contain lemon juice and grated rind, in addition to eggs, sugar and flour, or starch. Such products must not contain artificial color to imitate the appearance of egg because such added yellow color can serve only to conceal inferiority by indicating a quantity of egg when none is present, or by exaggerating the amount of egg that may be present. No statement on the label can correct the addition of color where that color conceals inferiority.

Some lemon pie fillers contain added citric acid and are flavored with oil of lemon instead of lemon juice and rind. These are usually labeled to show that they are flavored with lemon oil and contain added acid in order that you may know exactly what you are getting. Pie fillers may be artificially flavored or, in certain cases, artificially colored, providing the color does not conceal inferiority. The label will always tell you whether they have been artificially colored and flavored.

There are many preparations on the market, similar to these pie fillers, which are intended for the making of ice cream, custards, sauces, cake fillings, and such desserts. The same general principles apply to these preparations. That is, the labels will tell you if they contain all the materials necessary for the purpose, or if it is necessary for you to add ingredients to them before they can be used. The labels will also tell you if real fruit juices or other natural flavors have been used, or if imitations are used for flavoring.

Another class of dessert preparations much used in this country is the so-called gelatine dessert powders. Many of them have been designated as "Jelly Powder," or by a fanciful name based on the word "jelly." The labels now specify such products as "Gelatine Desserts." Gelatine-dessert preparations consist of powdered mixtures of gelatine, sugar and organic acids, usually tartaric or citric. These frequently referred to as fruit acids, since citric acid is generally derived from lemons, while tartaric acid is obtained from grapes. These preparations usually contain added flavors. When buying gelatine desserts, read the statement regarding the flavor. See if the product contains true flavor or imitation.

There is still another class of prepared dessert preparations on the market. These are generally called meringue powders and are perhaps used more commonly by commercial bakers than by housewives. As in the case of the other dessert preparations, the recipes in standard cookbooks give us a basis for judging the proper ingredients of these preparations. According to the cookbooks, meringues are made with the whites of eggs, sugar and flavoring. Many of the package preparations sold for use in making meringue, contain such ingredients as corn starch, sugar, a vegetable gum, such as Gum Tragacanth, powdered egg albumen and salt. Some also contain soda-alum. The labels on these products usually list the ingredients, or at least those ingredients not considered normal to a meringue powder.

This concludes my nineteenth talk which I am delivering in the hope that housewives throughout the west may become more careful, more intelligent, and more discriminating buyers. Again I offer to mail you free all "Read the Label" information which I have been distributing to those who have written me. A post card addressed to W. W. Vincent, at the Federal Food and Drug Laboratory, San Francisco, will put your name on the list.

Next week I shall tell you something about dried fruits. Do you know how many pounds of fresh fruit are represented in one pound of dried apricots, peaches or prunes? If you don't you still have something to learn about fruit products and should find this next talk both interesting and valuable.